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ABSTRACT

Rather than merely being a televised version of a classroom lecture, a true telecourse uses television to present information that is best conveyed visually and employs various methods (e.g., study guides, mailed assignments, special review sessions, and exams scheduled at community sites) to replace other classroom activities. Coastline Community College (CCC) provides such telecourses cooperatively with the Public Cable Television Authority and Dickinson Pacific Cablesystems. Though CCC enrolls 4,000 to 5,000 students per semester in its telecourses, enrollments have been restrained due to the unavailability of air time during prime hours. To remedy this, CCC has established a cable origination center at its administrative headquarters which will allow telecourses to originate from CCC, as well as provide more personal services (e.g., instructors can provide review sessions on cable and answer questions phoned in by students). Even with an origination center, several problem areas may inhibit cooperative ventures between cable companies and community colleges. First, the college needs to have a dedicated channel or channels to be certain that they will have channel time available consistently. Second, funding for telecourses in California is limited to those that are transferable to four-year institutions. Third, funds must be found for equipment. Finally, cable companies must provide interconnection, allowing subscribers from different companies access to college broadcasting. (KL)

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CABLE TELEVISION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Paper presented at the
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CABLE TELEVISION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

IN THE EVOLUTIONARY HIERARCHY, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COASTLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND CABLE TV MIGHT BEST BE COMPARED TO AN AMOEBA. IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS VERY PRIMITIVE. THE GOOD THING ABOUT THIS IS THAT PRIMITIVE ORGANISMS ARE EXTREMELY SIMPLE AND, THEREFORE, EASY TO DUPLICATE. THERE ARE THREE PARTIES TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COASTLINE AND CABLE: ONE IS COASTLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE WHICH, LIKE MANY OTHER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, HAS EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL IT WOULD LIKE TO PROVIDE OVER THE AIR; THE OTHER TWO ARE THE PUBLIC CABLE TELEVISION AUTHORITY (PCTA) AND DICKINSON PACIFIC CABLESYSTEMS WHICH, LIKE MANY OTHER MUNICIPALITIES AND CABLE SYSTEMS, HAVE CHANNEL CAPACITY THEY WOULD LIKE TO FILL WITH HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS. THERE IS REALLY ALSO A FOURTH PARTY, EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT AS THE OTHER TWO, AND THAT IS GOODWILL--WHICH WE FORTUNATELY HAVE IN ABUNDANCE.

COASTLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE HAS THE LARGEST ENROLLMENT IN TELECOURSES--BETWEEN 4,000 AND 5,000 PER SEMESTER--OF ANY COLLEGE IN THE COUNTRY. A MAJOR RESTRAINT ON THE GROWTH OF ENROLLMENTS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE UNAVAILABILITY OF AIR TIME AT PRECISELY THOSE HOURS (USUALLY KNOWN AS "PRIME TIME") WHEN MOST OF OUR STUDENTS WISH TO VIEW TELECOURSES.

BEFORE I GO FURTHER INTO THIS TOPIC, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO

DIGRESS AND TO TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT A TELECOURSE IS. I WILL BE HAPPY IF YOU LEAVE HERE THIS AFTERNOON FIRMLY CONVINCED OF ONLY ONE THING: A TELECOURSE IS NOT A CLASSROOM COURSE SHOWN ON A TELEVISION SCREEN. THE PIONEERS IN EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION DID INDEED GO INTO A CLASSROOM, TURN THEIR CAMERAS ON A PROFESSOR, AND ASSUME THAT THE STUDENT WOULD GET AS MUCH OUT OF SITTING IN FRONT OF A TELEVISION SET AS BY SITTING IN A CLASSROOM, BUT THAT ERA IS NOW LONG GONE, AND THE ERA OF THE TELECOURSE HAS DAWNED. A TRUE TELECOURSE UTILIZES THE MEDIUM OF TELEVISION PRIMARILY TO CONVEY THAT INFORMATION WHICH CAN BEST BE CONVEYED VISUALLY, AND IT UTILIZES OTHER METHODS TO REPLACE ALL THE OTHER ACTIVITIES WHICH NORMALLY TAKE PLACE IN A CLASSROOM. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT A TELECOURSE IN WHICH STUDENTS WATCH TWO HALF-HOUR SEGMENTS PER WEEK ON TELEVISION IS TRULY EQUIVALENT TO A THREE-UNIT CLASSROOM COURSE WHICH MEETS THREE HOURS PER WEEK. STUDENTS BUY THE SAME TEXTBOOK THAT CLASSROOM STUDENTS MIGHT USE, BUT IN ADDITION THEY BUY A SPECIAL STUDY GUIDE DESIGNED TO INTEGRATE THE TEXTBOOK WITH THE TELEVISED MATERIAL AND A STUDENT HANDBOOK WHICH DESCRIBES ALL THE OTHER ACTIVITIES WHICH THEY WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENGAGE IN IN THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER. TELECOURSE STUDENTS TAKE QUIZZES WEEKLY OR BIWEEKLY BY MAIL--THEY ARE SENT BACK TO THE COLLEGE FOR SCORING AND ARE RETURNED WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE ERRORS AND INDICATIONS AS TO WHERE THE CORRECT ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND. TELECOURSE STUDENTS CALL UP THEIR INSTRUCTORS OR THE INSTRUCTORS CALL THEM TO CHECK ON THEIR PROGRESS OR TO ASK

OR ANSWER QUESTIONS. TELECOURSE STUDENTS ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE NON-TEACHING STAFF OF THE COLLEGE WITH PROBLEMS OF MECHANICS, OF THE "HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS," SO TO SPEAK. STUDENTS GO TO ANY OF A NUMBER OF LOCAL LIBRARIES AS MANY TIMES AS THEY WANT TO RE-LOOK AT THE TELEVISED SEGMENTS OF THE COURSE OR TO PICK UP THOSE PROGRAMS THAT THEY HAVE MISSED BECAUSE OF ILLNESS OR SCHEDULE CONFLICTS. THEY ATTEND SPECIAL REVIEW SESSIONS BEFORE EXAMS AND GO TO TAKE THEIR MIDTERM OR FINAL EXAMS AT A SPECIAL SITE SOMEWHERE CONVENIENTLY LOCATED IN THE COMMUNITY. THERE IS ALSO A BIWEEKLY EXCHANGE OF LETTERS AND POSTCARDS BETWEEN THE INSTRUCTOR AND THE STUDENTS ON MATTERS CONCERNING BOTH COURSE CONTENT AND MECHANICS. THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT TELECOURSES ARE GOING TO BECOME MAJOR FEATURES OF OUR EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE IN YEARS TO COME. IT'S THUS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE GOING TO BE INVOLVED IN CABLECASTING THESE COURSES TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WE ARE OFFERING TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

NOW, BACK TO MY MAIN TOPIC, THAT OF THE COOPERATIVE VENTURE BETWEEN COASTLINE COLLEGE, THE PCTA, AND DICKINSON PACIFIC CABLESYSTEMS. CURRENTLY, COASTLINE DELIVERS SIX HOURS OF TELECOURSES PER WEEK TO THE DICKINSON PACIFIC CABLESYSTEMS HEADEND AND THEIR STAFF PUTS THEM ON THE AIR. WE ARE NOW ABOUT TO ESCALATE OUR INVOLVEMENT BY ESTABLISHING A CABLE ORIGINATION CENTER AT OUR ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS. WE HOPE THAT WITHIN 60 DAYS WE WILL HAVE OUR EQUIPMENT INSTALLED AND BE READY TO GO. COASTLINE IS EXPENDING APPROXIMATELY $50,000 FOR THIS PURPOSE AND FOR THIS SUM WE WILL HAVE "BASIC

MINIMAL" CABLE ORIGINATION CAPACITY. WE'LL HAVE TWO VIDEO CASSETTE PLAYERS, A TELECINE CHAIN, A TIME BASE CORRECTOR, A WAVE FORM MONITOR, A CHARACTER GENERATOR, AND A LOT OF SPEAKERS, SWITCHERS, PATCH BAYS, AMPLIFIERS, AND THINGS OF THAT TYPE.

WITH THE CABLE ORIGINATION CENTER IN PLACE, WE WILL REMOVE THE BURDEN OF AIRING THE TAPES FROM DICKINSON-PACIFIC CABLESYSTEMS, WHICH HAS BEEN MOST GENEROUS ABOUT BEARING THIS BURDEN FOR THE PAST SIX MONTHS, AND WE WILL ALSO ELIMINATE THE NEED TO MAKE DUPLICATES AND TO "BICYCLE" THE TAPES TO THEIR HEADEND. WE WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO MOVE A BIT OUT OF THE VERY RIGID FORMAT OF SIMPLY PUTTING ON THE TAPES OF OUR TELE-COURSES. WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO DO SOME PUBLIC RELATIONS WORK UTILIZING OUR NEW TELECINE CHAIN, AND TO START THINKING ABOUT SPECIAL PROGRAMMING WHICH WOULD MAKE THE TELECOURSES MORE PERSONALIZED--LIKE HAVING INSTRUCTORS ON CABLE TO PROVIDE REVIEW SESSIONS, TO ANSWER QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN TELEPHONED IN BY STUDENTS, AND THE LIKE. (THE POSSIBILITIES ARE, OF COURSE, ENDLESS WHEN WE MOVE INTO THE ERA OF INTERACTIVE TELEVISION. AT THAT TIME, EVEN THE CRITICISM THAT TELECOURSES DO NOT PROVIDE INTER-PERSONAL CONTACTS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS CAN BE REFUTED. WE ARE CERTAINLY NOT COUNTING ON THIS HAPPENING IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, BUT WE WILL BE READY WHEN IT COMES).

IN ADDITION TO THE $50,000 EXPENDED TO EQUIP THE CABLE ORIGINATION CENTER, WE EXPECT THAT IT WILL COST IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF $40,000 A YEAR TO OPERATE THE CENTER.

I SAID THAT THE COASTLINE--DICKINSON PACIFIC CABLESYSTEMS--PCTA RELATIONSHIP IS AN EXTREMELY SIMPLE ONE, AND BY THAT I MEAN THAT MANY OTHER COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE ENTERING INTO MUCH MORE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS. THEY WILL BE MANAGING PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNELS, THEY WILL BE PROVIDING TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS IN THE AREA OF CABLE TELEVISION, AND THEY'RE INVOLVED IN EXPERIMENTS IN INTERACTIVE TELEVISION.

WITH ALL THIS ACTIVITY UNDERWAY, I'D LIKE TO LOOK FOR A MOMENT AT SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT MAY INHIBIT THESE COOPERATIVE VENTURES BETWEEN CABLE COMPANIES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES FROM REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. THE FIRST IS THAT THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION INVOLVED NEEDS TO HAVE A DEDICATED CHANNEL OR CHANNELS. I THINK THAT EVERYBODY RECOGNIZES THIS, BUT IT IS THE BEDROCK ON WHICH THE ENTIRE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT RESTS. COLLEGES NEED TO BE CERTAIN THAT THEY WILL HAVE CHANNEL TIME AVAILABLE TO THEM WELL INTO THE FUTURE BEFORE THEY CAN MAKE A COMMITMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL FUNDS TO ESTABLISH AN ORIGINATION CENTER, EVEN OF THE VERY BASIC TYPE THAT WE ARE INSTALLING AT COASTLINE.

A SECOND PROBLEM IS THAT COMMUNITY COLLEGES DO NOT HAVE ANY LOCAL FUNDING. ALL OF OUR MONEY COMES FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA VIA A VERY COMPLEX FORMULA. LOCAL PROPERTY TAXES ARE SENT TO SACRAMENTO, THE FOLKS UP THERE SUBTRACT THE AMOUNT OF OUR PROPERTY TAXES FROM THE TOTAL THEY'VE DECIDED THAT COLLEGES SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO EXPEND DURING THAT YEAR, AND THEN THEY FILL IN THE REST WITH STATE MONEY. IT DOESN'T

MATTER IF LOCAL PROPERTY TAX RECEIPTS GO UP OR DOWN, OR IF YOU LIVE IN A RICH OR A POOR COMMUNITY--THE AMOUNT A GIVEN COLLEGE WILL RECEIVE IS DECIDED BY THE STATE AND THE STATE ALONE. DESPITE THE FACT THAT MUCH OF THE MONEY COMES DIRECTLY FROM LOCAL SOURCES, THE STATE ALONE DECIDES WHAT COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS WILL BE FUNDED, AND THE LEGISLATURE DECIDED A FEW YEARS AGO THAT THE ONLY COURSES BY TELEVISION THAT IT WOULD FUND ARE THOSE WHICH WERE TRANSFERABLE TO A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY. THIS MEANS THAT MANY OF THE COURSES THAT COMMUNITY COLLEGES OFFER IN THE CLASSROOM--COURSES IN RETIREMENT PLANNING, COURSES IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, COURSES IN BASIC EDUCATION, COURSES IN PARENTING OR IN COPING WITH DIVORCE, COURSES IN NUTRITIONAL COOKING--CANNOT BE OFFERED BY TELEVISION UNLESS THE DISTRICT FINDS ANOTHER SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THEM. THIS WOULD MEAN TAKING MONEY AWAY FROM CLASSROOM COURSES AND, IN AN ERA OF TIGHT BUDGETS, DIVERTING FUNDS IS A VERY DIFFICULT TASK. THUS, WE ARE ANXIOUS TO HAVE THIS LAW CHANGED SO THAT ANY COURSE OFFERED OVER TELEVISION WOULD RECEIVE THE SAME FUNDING AS IF IT WERE OFFERED IN A CLASSROOM. TELEVISION DOES NOT CHANGE THE CONTENT OF A COURSE; IT'S SIMPLY A DIFFERENT DELIVERY SYSTEM. MANY NON-TRANSFERABLE COURSES ARE AMONG OUR MOST POPULAR AND WOULD HAVE GREAT APPEAL FOR YOUR SUBSCRIBERS. WE WOULD LIKE TO ENLIST YOUR HELP, AND THE HELP OF THE CABLE INDUSTRY, IN GETTING THIS LAW CHANGED DURING THE NEXT SESSION. I BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL FIND

IT ADVANTAGEOUS IN THE LONG RUN IF COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE ABLE TO OFFER ALL OF THEIR COURSE WORK OVER CABLE.

A THIRD PROBLEM IS FINDING FUNDING FOR THE EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR EVEN A SIMPLE ORIGINATION CENTER. THERE'S NO WAY THAT THE STATE IS GOING TO BE WILLING TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR EQUIPMENT AT THIS TIME. THEREFORE, WE REALLY NEED TO LOOK TO YOU PEOPLE, TO THE CABLE COMPANIES, TO HELP US WITH OUR INITIAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT. I SHOULD SAY THAT, AS OF A FEW YEARS AGO, WE MIGHT NOT HAVE HAD TO MAKE THIS REQUEST. AT THAT TIME COMMUNITY COLLEGES WERE FUNDED MORE GENEROUSLY AND MOST OF THEM HAD RESERVES THEY COULD DIP INTO TO THE EXTENT OF $50,000 OR $100,000 FOR A ONE-TIME EXPENDITURE. THAT SITUATION HAS CHANGED COMPLETELY, AND COLLEGES ARE FINDING THEMSELVES WITHOUT RESERVES. IT'S ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO TAKE FUNDS AWAY FROM A TRADITIONAL COLLEGE ACTIVITY TO FINANCE SOMETHING NEW, AND THAT IS WHERE WE STAND IN THE AREA OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AT THE MOMENT. IT'S O.K. TO BE INNOVATIVE <u>IF</u> IT DOESN'T TAKE MONEY AWAY FROM A LONG-ESTABLISHED COLLEGE PROGRAM. ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN ORGANIZATIONS OF ANY KIND KNOW HOW VERY DIFFICULT IT IS TO REPLACE A CONVENTIONAL ACTIVITY WITH A NEW ONE. WE NEED YOUR HELP IN THIS ARENA; IF WE CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO PUT YOUR MONEY INTO A JOINT PROJECT, THEN IT WILL BE MUCH EASIER FOR US TO CONVINCE OUR FACULTY, OUR BOARDS OF TRUSTEES, AND OUR COMMUNITIES THAT THEY NEED TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION ALSO.

A FOURTH PROBLEM IS ONE THAT I BELIEVE ONLY YOU CAN SOLVE FOR US, AND THAT IS THE QUESTION OF INTERCONNECTION. AS I INDICATED, WE AT COASTLINE ARE NOW ALL SET TO CABLECAST VIA THE DICKINSON-PACIFIC CABLESYSTEMS HEADEND TO ALL OF OUR CITIZENS WHO LIVE WITHIN THE AREA THEY SERVE. BUT A LARGE NUMBER OF OUR RESIDENTS LIVE IN AREAS SERVED BY TELEPROMPTER, WHICH HAPPENS TO HAVE THE FRANCHISES ON EITHER SIDE--ONE TO THE NORTH AND ONE TO THE SOUTH--OF THE CABLESYSTEMS AREA. THIS MEANS THAT TO SERVE THEM WE HAVE TO BICYCLE NOT TO ONE TELEPROMPTER HEADEND, BUT TO TWO TELEPROMPTER HEADENDS, AND THIS LIMITS THE NUMBER OF COURSES WE CAN OFFER TO THEIR SUBSCRIBERS. CITIZENS IN THESE AREAS WONDER WHY THEY CANNOT HAVE THE SAME EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AS THEIR FELLOW RESIDENTS OF THE COAST COMMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT WHO LIVE IN THE CENTRAL PART OF THE AREA. IN LIGHT OF THE FINANCIAL SITUATION I DESCRIBED EARLIER, WE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT AFFORD TO PROVIDE MICROWAVE OR ANY OTHER KIND OF LINKAGE THAT I KNOW OF FROM COLLEGE FUNDS. THEREFORE, WE ARE AT THE MERCY OF YOU, THE CABLE COMPANIES, TO PROVIDE THE INTERCONNECTIONS WE NEED. PLEASE GET AROUND TO PROVIDING THEM AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!

I'D LIKE TO CLOSE BY SAYING HOW VERY FORTUNATE WE ALL ARE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PIONEERING STAGE OF THE CABLE INDUSTRY. IN MOST OF OUR ACTIVITIES, WE JUST FOLLOW ALONG IN THE PATHWAYS LAID OUT BY OUR FOREFATHERS. HERE WE ARE THE PATHFINDERS, AND WHAT WE DO WILL HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THE FUTURE OF MANKIND. THIS MARVELOUS NEW MEANS OF COMMUNICATION OF WHICH WE ARE THE TRUSTEES CAN TURN OUT TO BE AN "OPIATE

OF THE MASSES," LULLING PEOPLE INTO PASSIVITY AS SPECTATORS OF THE WORLD PARADE. OR IT CAN TURN INTO A TRUE "MAGIC LANTERN," OPENING UP A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF IDEAS THAT WILL ENABLE PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN SHAPING THEIR OWN LIVES.

YOU--AND WE--HAVE BOTH THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE THAT THIS NEW INVENTION GOES DOWN IN HISTORY AS A BOON TO MANKIND. I KNOW I SPEAK FOR ALL THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES WHEN I SAY THAT WE STAND READY TO JOIN YOU IN THIS EXCITING ENDEAVOR.

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